

Title: No Sandwiches Here: Representations of Women in Dabiq and Inspire Magazines

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Research Question:

How, and to what extent, are women represented within Dabiq and Inspire magazines?

Importance:

As we know from a wealth of mass media reporting, women are increasingly the focus of recruiters from pro-jihadist networks. Much of this reporting focuses on the Islamic State, in particular, as representing a new threat because of the nature of some of its female empowerment messages and imagery. However, we know very little about these messages and the extent to which they cohere with, or differ from, ideological views of women found within this and other pro-jihadist groups.

Research Findings:

Contrary to the image of powerful young women frequently seen within propaganda distributed through social media, analysis of official discourse (as found in Dabiq and Inspire magazines) reveals that women continue to hold a lesser social status within Islamic State and Al Qaeda networks regardless of purported ideological differences between groups. This inferior status is revealed not only through the low frequency of references to women within these magazines, but also, when women do appear, in the highly circumscribed ways in which they are represented.

Implications:

Counter-narrative efforts aimed at women should focus on illustrating the significant disconnect between official and non-official discourses to reveal a truer picture of women's relative inferior status within pro-jihadist networks.